

# JOINT MEETING BETWEEN JERICHO PLANNING COMMISSION & UNDERHILL PLANNING COMMISSION

Tuesday, November 7, 2017 6:30 PM

## Minutes

**Jericho Planning Commissioners Present:** Jason Cheney, Susan Bresee, Erik Glitman, Wendy Verrei Berenback

**Underhill Planning Commissioners Present:** David Edson, Catherine Kearns, David Glidden, Johnathan Drew, Nancy Bergersen, Cynthia Seybolt

**Staff/Municipal Representatives Present:** Andrew Strniste, Underhill Planning Director; Katherine Sonnick, Jericho Planner

**Others Present:** Glenn Martin, Bill Gardner, Brian Drebelbis, Mara Angolano, Benjamin Joslin, Michael Oman,;

[6:25] The Jericho and Underhill Planning Commissions convened at Jericho Town Hall at 6:25pm.

[6:31] Jericho Chair Jason Cheney called the meeting to order.

[6:32] The Underhill Planning Commission and Jericho Commission provided introductions.

[6:33] Jericho Chair Cheney opened up the meeting to public comment. No public comment was provided.

[6:34] Both Commissions asked questions about each other Commissions, such as the number of members and the tenure of the various members. Jericho Chair advised that the Jericho Planning Commission had wanted to meet with the Underhill Planning Commission to discuss the goals of each other's community, specifically: plans for the Underhill Flats/Riverside area; understanding the commercial districts of each other's Towns; discussion of the Route 15 corridor; shared natural resources, such as contiguous habitat blocks; as well as the different perspective each Town is taking towards Planning.

[6:36] Jericho Staff Member Sonnick advised that she received feedback from the Jericho Farmer's Market that Underhill and Jericho should coordinate a meeting to discuss common issues between the two communities.

[6:37] A discussion ensued about agenda item 3, "Discuss Adjoining Zoning Districts." In addition to discussing Compatibility, Jericho's Riverside Character Based District, and activity, Jericho Chair Cheney advised that infrastructure should also be added as a topic of discussion. Jericho Staff Member Sonnick provided an overview of the different zoning districts along the Jericho-Underhill border, and advised that the various zoning districts seem compatible with one another. Jericho Chair Cheney advised that the Riverside area in Jericho was primed for growth and a target area for denser development and commercial development. Jericho Staff Member Sonnick advised that Jericho has been embracing the smaller lots, and that she knew that the two towns use to collaborate more; however, have not in the recent years. She continued to state that two goals between the two towns should be: 1) working together in the Underhill Flats/Riverside area and 2) ensuring habitat and natural resource connectivity between the two Towns. Underhill Commissioner Edson advised that he was concerned about property rights. Underhill Commissioner Kearns asked a clarification question about habitat blocks, as well as asking how

habitat blocks differed from conservation districts. Underhill Chair Seybolt informed the Jericho Planning Commission that Underhill did not look at natural resources during their recent updates to the Zoning Regulations, as they did not have enough time; however, Underhill had an active Conservation Commission that they plan on working with in the coming future on various issues.

[6:52] Jericho Chair Cheney asked if Underhill had a trails committee. Underhill Chair Seybolt advised that the Underhill Trails Committee is now defunct; however, the chair of the Conservation Commission has essentially taken over a lot of the functions that the trail committee performed. Jericho Commissioner Glitman asked the Underhill Planning Commission about bike paths and the possibility of creating a bike path that connects the two Towns. Jericho Staff Member Sonnick advised that they have begun design of a small segment of an overall route along Route 15 between the Jericho Corners and the Riverside/Flats village centers. She then explained that the Town of Jericho is in the design phase of a pedestrian crossing near Jolly, that undergoing further design work since the State of Vermont did not like the agreed upon pedestrian island design. The current design includes a narrowing of the road at the crossing. Jericho Staff Member then advised that they are working with Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) to address potential improvements with Brown's River Middle School. Underhill Chair Seybolt asked about the AARP grant that was obtained in a joint effort a few years ago, specifically at Dickinson Street. The Jericho Planning Commission advised that the Selectboard had received approval from the state to turn Dickinson Street into a two-way road from Route 15 to the Market entrance but had yet to act on implementing that change. The desire is to turn the remainder of Dickinson into a two-way street but thought it would be wise to wait until further development occurred on the large sawmill parcel.

[6:59] A discussion ensued about the sale of the Villeneuve property. Jericho Commissioner Bresee informed the Underhill Planning Commission that the Riverside area is intended to be mixed-use/dense area and that Jericho would like the area to be pedestrian friendly and provided for more connectivity. Underhill Staff Member Strniste provided background on the current sidewalk project in Underhill. Underhill Commissioner Kearns asked what the target for the development of Riverside area was. The Jericho Planning Commission answered that they would like to see multi-family dwellings, some small scale commercial/local services type development and mixed use development. Underhill Commissioner Kearns informed the Jericho Commission that many of the Underhill residents are nervous about too much development. Underhill Commissioner Drew followed-up by stating that Underhill residents did not want development. Jericho Commissioner Bresee responded by stating that the Jericho Commission envisioned the flats to be an area to concentrate development which would take the development pressures off other areas of town so they could remain rural and undeveloped. Also, she noted that the parcel was envisioned to be developed with interconnectivity so people wouldn't have to drive from business to business and there would be limited curbcuts. Commissioner Kearns asked how Jericho intended to attract business that people would be comfortable with. Jericho Chair Cheney advised that they were not so much concerned about what was in the building, but rather, how the building looks. Jericho Commissioner Glitman also stated that the square footage requirement also help deter the big box stores. Underhill Chair Seybolt asked about who determines what fits the character based code. Jericho Staff Member Sonnick advised that it was the Development Review Board, and then summarized the intent of the character based code, and what is involved with the regulation. Underhill Commissioner Kearns opined that character based zoning would be too stringent for smaller businesses, as more money would have to be allocated towards design (the hiring of an architect). Staff member Sonnick noted that it would seem likely that the owner of the parcel would likely construct the buildings for tenants and that could take the financial pressure of a small business owner.



[7:18] Underhill Commissioner Glidden asked the Underhill Planning Commission how receptive they thought Underhill would be to character based zoning, which they answered in the negative. Jericho Commissioner Bresee advised that the development and adoption of the character based regulations in Jericho was a process that took a few years with a lot of public input; advising that the Town of Jericho was striving to match the design and scale of the buildings that were already there. Jericho Commissioner Glitman opined that he did not want to see the Underhill side of the Flats left behind Jericho's side. Jericho Chair Cheney advised that the implementation of character based zoning in the Flats would provide consistency. Underhill Commissioner Edson advised that he would be opposed to restrictions on property owners. Underhill Commissioner Kearns advised that people would likely have concerns about traffic and crime. Jericho Commissioner Bresee noted that further development in the area would likely have the opposite effect as more eyes on the street would make it a safer area. Jericho Chair Cheney opened up the meeting for public comment on agenda item 3. Resident Bill Gardner recommended that Jericho Staff Member Sonnick show the Underhill Planning Commission the images in the Jericho zoning regulations of the character based code. Underhill Commissioner Drew asked if character based zoning considers what type of structures are currently existing, and that the Town develops rules to perpetuate that type of development. Jericho Commissioner Bresee advised that the goal is not to duplicate, but rather, to control scale and evolve in a harmonious way. Underhill Commissioner Edson advised that character based zoning made sense for large scale development, but that he was not comfortable extending those regulations to apply to those looking to build single-family houses. Jericho Resident Ben Joslin made some observations about the how the Jericho Market didn't really interact with the green in front of the store. He asked if the green was a public park. Jericho Commissioner Bresee and Jericho Staff Member Sonnick advised that the market was designed and approved under the previous regulations and the park has easement language to allow for public access. Underhill Resident Brian Dreibelbis advised that Park Street seems to be the forgotten road, and informed the Jericho Commission about his concern of the Villeneuve property being developed.

[7:33] Underhill Chair Seybolt opined that she was having trouble visualizing the implementation of the area being development consistently. The Jericho Commission advised that they visualized that the area would be developed by one developer. Staff Member Sonnick also stated that the process would not be a normal subdivision, and also advised that development in the area seems inevitable, and that the zoning put into place would help facilitate what gets built.

[7:37] The Underhill and Jericho Commissions began a discussion about agenda item 4, natural resource connectivity. Jericho Chair Cheney asked if this topic would be better served as a discussion between both Town's conservation commissions; asked if Underhill had a plan to reassemble a trails committee; and if the Towns should communicate more often to keep each other abreast on current issues. Underhill Commissioner Drew advised that the zoning standards for each Town should be compared in more depth. Jericho Chair Cheney advised that the Jericho Commission wanted to be consistent with Underhill, specifically using as an example that sidewalks are not built on opposite sides of the street. Jericho Commissioner Glitman advised Jericho would have to keep Underhill apprised of what projects occurring in Riverside. Underhill Commissioner Glidden advised that a joint meeting between the two conservation commissions would likely be a good idea. Jericho Commissioner Bresee advised that they have been listening to their Conservation Commission's recommendations to develop stronger natural resources protections in the zoning. Underhill Chair Seybolt advised that those recommendations may be helpful for Underhill, and asked if they would be willing to forward along those recommendations. The Jericho Commission noted that it would make sense to share information so as to not recreate the wheel as well as for consistency.



[7:45] The Commissions then began a discussion about agenda item 5, public involvement. Jericho Chair Cheney advised that they had difficulty engaging with the public. Underhill Chair Seybolt concurred, and advised of the different approaches Underhill used in its current bylaw updates. Underhill Commissioner Glidden advised that one difficulty was that residents had difficulty understanding the difference between the Development Review Board and the Planning Commission and what the function of each board was. Underhill Commissioner Kearns asked about Jericho's website. Jericho Chair Cheney advised that some folks have indicated that they don't look at the website and stated that they have started using social media. Jericho Commissioner Glitman opined that he thought the periodic snip-bits of information through Front Porch Forum was effective and referring people to the website for additional information was helpful. A conversation then ensued about whether having Underhill's public meeting at the library on a Saturday was effective. One member of the public advised that they liked the redline versions of documents that were being updated available. Jericho Chair Cheney noted that staff used Front Porch Forum to provide that type of information in small bits and that seemed to be appreciated. Underhill Chair Seybolt opined that residents do not seem to care about updates to regulations until they find out that the changes affects them. Resident Glenn Martin advised that the natural resource restrictions that Jericho is looking to implement will cause controversy, as he believes that the regulations will infringe upon property rights.

[7:57] Jericho Chair Cheney opened up the meeting to other business. Underhill Chair advised that the Planners should remain in touch with each other and share anything that may be important for the other town to know. Underhill Commissioner Kearns asked if a google document identifying lessons learned would be a valuable tool. After hearing agreement, she agreed to create such a document. Jericho Commissioner Bresee advised that if CCRPC or VLCT presents any information, that both commission should participate. Jericho Chair Cheney asked if Underhill had any plans if the Camp Ethan Allen were to ever be abandoned by the federal government. Underhill Staff Member Strniste advised that the area was zoned as Soil & Water Conservation, a very low impact zoning district. The Commissions determined that if the federal government to ever abandon the area, the areas would be compatible. A discussion ensued about the commercial district in the Jericho. Underhill Staff Member Strniste provided an overview of an attempt to change the zoning in the flats, which failed in 2013. A more in-depth conversation began about the Jericho Commercial District, specifically the intent of the district and the uses it allows. Underhill Chair Seybolt advised that a grant for Underhill Flats to develop a character based regulation may be beneficial. Jericho Resident Benjamin Joslin opined that a bike path on a rural road may detract from the ruralness of the area. The Jericho Commissioners believed that a bike path, as developed in other towns such as Stowe, helped loop around neighborhoods and could be designed in a way to be off the streets. Paths currently exist to connect. A rural road is more defined by the number of curb cuts vs. a bike path.

[8:21] Underhill Chair Seybolt provided an overview of the updates to the zoning regulations that the Underhill Planning Commission were proposing, which included: cleaning up some of the grammatical errors, the incorporation of a new zoning district, and loosen the restrictions for the owner occupancy rule for detached accessory dwellings.

[8:24] Both Commissions voted to adjourn.

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Respectfully Submitted By:

Andrew Strniste, Underhill Planning Director & Zoning Administrator

The minutes of the November 7, 2017 meeting were accepted this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2017.

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Jason Cheney, Jericho Planning Commission Chair

  
Cynthia Seybolt, Underhill Planning Commission Chair

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